

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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ARE WE CAMPBELLITES?

by Marvin Rickett

Members of the denominational world often call members of the churches of Christ Campbellites. Many do it in derision, but some honestly believe this is properly what we should be called. They believe the term church of Christ should be reserved for that invisible body which contains the good people out of all denominations, and not be worn by any one "sect." They believe that we are a sect founded by Alexander Campbell in the early 1800s.

Do we have any right to wear the title Campbellite? Or do they have any right to call us Campbellite? There are two possible situations that would give credence to the term Campbellite: (1) If Alexander Campbell actually founded (originated, began) the church of Christ, or (2) if we follow Alexander Campbell's teachings. A person is called a Lutheran because Martin Luther actually founded the Lutheran church. A person is called a Calvinist because he believes and practices religious tenets that are peculiar and unique to John Calvin.

Did Alexander Campbell found (originate, start) the church of Christ? If so, when? Alexander Campbell came to America in 1809 from Northern Ireland. His father, Thomas Campbell, came to America in 1807, and had been teaching the principles of restoring New Testament Christianity a year before Alexander came. He had written down these principles in the "Declaration and Address." From these principles, the Campbells learned they needed to be baptized (immersed) for remission of sins, so they were baptized in 1812. On New Year's day in 1832, the Campbells combined their movement with the Stone movement. On which of these dates did Alexander Campbell found the church of Christ?

The answer is, none of the above. In 1794, James O'Kelley had deter-

mined to restore the church of Christ in Virginia with a group called the "Republican Methodists." This was when Alexander Campbell was only 6 years old, and 15 years before he came to America. In 1804, Barton W. Stone and five other men drew up a document called, "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery", in which they set forth principles of restoring the church of Christ. This was when Campbell was only 16 years old and 5 years before he came to America. None of these men founded the church of Christ, but they were members of the church of Christ years before Campbell allegedly "founded" it.

Jesus Christ founded (originated, started) the church of Christ in A.D. 30. In A.D. 28, He said "Upon this Rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Luke said that in A.D. 30, "the Lord added to the church daily" (Acts 2:47). Paul called congregations "churches of Christ" in A.D. 57 (Romans 16:16). All O'Kelley, Stone and Campbell did was restore the original New Testament church that Jesus had founded over 1700 years before by using the Bible as the only authority and guide in faith and practice. And O'Kelley and Stone did it before Campbell! But no one calls the church O'Kelleyites or Stoneites. Campbell received that "distinction" because that with his superior mind and personality he became the leader in restoring the Lord's church.

Does the church of Christ today follow Alexander Campbell's teachings? There is nothing peculiar or unique of Campbell's teaching that we believe or practice. If Campbell taught something the Bible already taught, we believe and practice it, not because Campbell taught it, but because the Bible teaches it. If Campbell taught anything that the Bible did not teach we do not accept it. For

example, Campbell advocated the missionary society; the Bible does not, and therefore we do not accept the missionary society. Campbell taught that immersion was necessary for remission of sins; the Bible teaches that immersion is necessary for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16), therefore we believe and practice immersion for remission of sins. Campbell preferred the name "Disciples of Christ," the Bible gives the new name "Christian" for followers of Christ (Acts 11:26), therefore we wear the name "Christian" instead of Campbell's preference, "Disciples of Christ." Campbell advocated taking the Lord's supper the first day of each week; the Bible also advocates taking the Lord's Supper the first day of each week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34), so we observe the Lord's Supper the first day of every week.

We are not Campbellites. We repudiate the title. It is an insult to call us that. Campbell did not found the church of Christ. We believe and practice nothing that was peculiar to Alexander Campbell. We are Christians. The church of Christ is the church Jesus built. We believe and practice only that which we find authorized in the New Testament (Col. 3:17). Campbell tried to practice this same principle of believing and practicing only that which he found authorized in the New Testament. He was a leader in popularizing and explaining this principle. We appreciate the work he did. But he did not found a church.

We wear no man's name. The Lord wanted us to wear His name. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We invite all religious people to wear this name. Yet, to have the right to it, they are obligated to omit all human creeds, doctrines, and names; and do His will.

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PUBLIC DISCUSSION

by Ted J. Clarke

In line with brother Marvin Rickett's article, "Are We Campbellites?", we ask you to consider the following comments. The apostle Peter said, "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*" (First Peter 3:15). The word "reason" in the verse above means "a defense," meaning that each one should be ready to give a defense of his or her faith to any who ask why one believes a particular way. The apostle Paul spoke of the same readiness in Philippians 1:17, saying, "*I am set for the defence of the gospel.*"

Nearly forty years ago, when I began studying the Bible seriously to see if it provided what I needed to make my life happy and productive, I was genuinely impressed that members of churches of Christ seemed very open and willing to study what they believed the Bible taught. Many in other religious groups

seemed to resent being questioned about what they believed and why. In order to try to find the true church out of the hundreds claiming to be Christ's church, I bought or borrowed a number of books and religious tracts that discussed the differences between what the Bible teaches and what is taught in the denominational world as religious truth. It used to be that denominational groups were willing to try to prove their doctrines by the Bible in public discussion. Over the years since certain men lead an attempt to restore the New Testament church, hundreds of religious public discussions have been conducted between preachers for the churches of Christ and representatives of almost all of the major denominations. In studying these discussions, time after time I have seen the truth shine as bright as the sun and noted the utter failure of denominations in trying to prove their doctrines from the Bible!

Eventually, most denominations realized their inability to sustain their teaching from the Scripture and quit engaging in such public discussions. They will not give their members the opportunity to see their doctrines tested by the opposition in comparing them with what the Bible says. Ignoring what Peter and Paul said in the Scriptures above, it is now considered inexpedient and politically incorrect to challenge someone's faith and ask that they test it by what the Bible teaches. Just like the Roman Catholic church tried for centuries to keep their membership ignorant of the Scriptures by keeping the Bible out of their hands, leaders of Protestant denominations promote a similar type of ignorance by refusing to test their faith by considering a public discussion of what the Scriptures teach in comparison to what their various doctrines are. It is also sad to note that there are now many in the churches of Christ who have lost their bearings and are adopting many of the false doctrines which were shown in previous generations to be in error. These brethren, like most members of denominational churches, are refusing to accept challenges to their faith and ignore

calls to restudy what they have accepted as religious truth. They cannot prove their newly adopted doctrines by the Bible and will not even attempt to do so. They rebuke those who challenge them to respond to First Peter 3:15 as being arrogant and unkind. Were our Lord or Peter or Paul arrogant and unkind? Certainly not!

Our Lord was involved in religious controversy throughout most of His personal ministry on earth. For one section as an example, read Matthew, chapters 21-23, where Jesus confronted the religious errors of the chief priests and scribes, the elders of the people, and the religious sects of His day (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians). Jesus challenged these people and their beliefs because they were opposed to the teaching of God in the Scriptures. He likewise defended His teaching as being of God and according to God's word (John 5:39-47; cf. Isaiah 8:20). All of the gospel accounts give multiplied examples of such activity by our Lord. He did not leave people in religious error unchallenged!

The word of God is the "final answer" in regard to what we must believe and teach (Second Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3; Second Peter 1:3). We must not add to it, detract from it, or modify it, lest we be found to be false teachers and be lost (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19). We stand ready to give an answer (to make a defense) to anyone who asks us a reason concerning the hope in us, and we will try to do that with meekness and fear (First Peter 3:15; cf. Philippians 1:17). We believe that we are giving book, chapter, and verse from the Scriptures for all we teach and practice in religion. We want to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent. We desire to call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways. Only by doing so can we have God's approval.

Myself and many others stand ready to affirm in public discussion (or privately) that the church of Christ (of which I am a member) is the New Testament church that our Lord promised to build and is Scriptural in name, origin, and practice. We try to affirm those

principles of Scripture every time we publish the **Fulton County Gospel News**. If that affirmation is true (and I truly believe it is true), then those churches which differ in the essential elements involved in that claim are not Scriptural and are unacceptable before God. If you have an interest in challenging our faith in the public arena, or to defend your beliefs against what we are teaching, we will do all that we can to organize a time and place to do so with you or a suitable representative of your persuasion. If we are in religious error, we want to know it, and if you are teaching or practicing doctrines that will cause you to be lost, we hope you want to know so too.

We have no desire in controversy merely for the sake of being contentious, but we believe that there are serious issues that will affect the eternal destiny of those who violate the will of God. Remember, according to First Peter 3:15, you have an obligation to defend your faith, and according to the Great Commission you have a responsibility to promote and contend earnestly only for "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints" (Matthew 28:8-20; Jude 3). Someone has correctly noted that, "Truth has nothing to fear from an honest investigation." The inspired wise man said, "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23).



LIFE AFTER DEATH

Bible Lesson Number Twelve

John 5:28-29 "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

That the Bible teaches that there is life after death is obvious. The most casual reader can easily see this. The question that most people have is: what will it be like to live again? There are some things about life after death that we cannot know now.

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

We are told that the body that we have then will not be like the body we have now (**1 Corinthians 15:35-50**). Some of the key terms used to describe the new body are glorious, incorruptible, powerful, spiritual, heavenly, changed, and immortal. We can only guess at the wonders of such a body.

In addition to the new body, there will be a new dwelling place described as "a new heaven and a new earth" (**2 Peter 3:13**). In what probably is highly figurative language conveying the thought of transcendent beauty, John says that the gates are of pearl and the street of pure gold (**Revelation 21:18-21**). Jesus said he would prepare a place for us in his Father's house (**John 14:1-3**). The grandeur of the world in which we now live is not to be compared with the magnificence of the world to come. Seeing the beauty around us in a world fraught with blemishes, yet, so wonderful, what marvels must await God's people in the eternal home.

Another question that often occurs is: shall we know one another in heaven? If so, will it not make us sad to realize that someone we have loved in this world is not there in the heavenly home with us?

Let's consider the second question first. The answer is to be found in our confidence in God that he will do what he said he will do. The possibilities of how he might handle that which seems to be so great a problem to us in our present world are many. It may be, in that the fleshly relationships will no longer exist (**Matthew 22:23-32**), we will have a much more complete understanding of what really went on in this life. It may be that those who are lost, whether we

knew them or not, will be seen in their true light as enemies of Christ and his people. On the other hand, it is also quite possible that God, in his infinite wisdom and power, may blot out of our memory any knowledge of having ever known anyone in this world other than those who are found to be with us in heaven. Whatever, the answer to the question may be, we are constrained to have faith and confidence in God and his power to fulfill his promise to "wipe away all tears" (**Revelation 7:17; 21:4**).

The answer to the first question is simply: yes! We will know one another in heaven! If we would not, how would we know ourselves? How could we be happy if we got there and did not know who we were? What reward would that be? The Bible is plain and simple concerning this question of identity of people after death. The witch of Endor and King Saul both recognized Samuel after he had been dead for some time (**1 Samuel 28:7-20**). Moses and Elijah had been dead for many years when they appeared with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration and were recognized by Peter, James and John (**Matthew 17:1-3**). Lazarus, the beggar, was carried away to Abraham's bosom after death (**Luke 16:22**). What would be the point of such a statement if he did not know who Abraham was? Furthermore, in the same story, the rich man that died knew who both of them were. Paul's words in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** would have no meaning or hold forth any hope at all if it were not for the fact that we will know one another in heaven! One of the key words in that text is "together." Togetherness is meaningless if we do not know those with whom we are together.

Every person who has lived or will live on the face of the earth, from Adam to the end of time, will be raised from the dead (**John 5:28,29**). Those who have done the will of God as revealed in the Bible will be raised to an eternal life of happiness. As in previous lessons, his will is that we should hear the gospel of Jesus, believe it, repent of sins, confess faith in him, be baptized into him, and walk in the light.

Questions

1. Who will be raised from the dead?
2. What kind of a body will we have?
3. How does the Bible describe heaven?
4. Will we know one another in heaven?
5. If we know one another in heaven, how can we keep from being sad to know that someone we loved here in this world is not there?
6. Who is going to heaven?

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THE SINNER'S PRAYER

by Thomas F. Eaves, Sr.
(Deceased)

Recently my wife and I went into a sandwich shop to eat lunch. On the counter was a stack of booklets titled, "God's Simple Plan of Salvation." Later as I read the material I came across two statements which caught my attention.

On Salvation the booklet has:
"Just pray: Oh God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus was my substitute when He died on the cross. I believe His shed blood, death, burial and resurrection were for me. I now receive Him as my Savior. Thank you for the forgiveness of my sins and the gift of salvation and everlasting life, because of your merciful grace. Amen."

It is interesting to note that in the Bible conversions, not one single person was commanded to pray "the sinner's prayer." Simon the sorcerer was commanded to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22), but he had already believed and had been baptized (Acts 8:13). Simon was a believer (Christian) who had sinned and was instructed on how he could obtain forgiveness.

The answer to the question of the alien sinner, "What must I do to be saved?" is clearly set forth in Acts 2:22-47.

- Peter preached Jesus Christ.
- The people were convicted.
- Convinced of their sin, they asked for instructions.
- Peter answered their question.
- They obeyed Peter's instructions.
- God added them to the church.

On baptism the booklet mentioned above had, "You should be baptized in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as a public testimony of your salvation, and then unite with a Bible believing church without delay."

Nowhere in the Bible do you read that people were baptized or told to be baptized "as a public testimony of one's salvation." You do read in the Bible that baptism was:

- For remission of sins - Acts 2:38
- To wash away sins - Acts 22:16
- To put one into Christ - Gal. 3:27
- To unite the sinner with the death of Jesus Christ - Romans 6:3-4.
- For salvation - 1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16

IMMEDIATE CHANGE OF E-MAIL ADDRESS !

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The address reflects the local church of Christ (coc) and the paper we publish (fcgn). Please make this change immediately. You may also send me personal correspondence at this address.

Thank you - Ted J. Clarke, editor

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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